

ANTI-SLAVERY TRACTS. No. 6.

THE "RUIN" OF JAMAICA.

By R. HILDRETH.

CHAPTER I. — *Historical Introduction.*

PERHAPS there is not a single delusion more systematically and more perseveringly practised upon the good people of the United States, and of Great Britain too, than the comparison so perpetually brought to their notice of the alleged present economical ruin of the Island of Jamaica, as contrasted with its alleged former prosperity, and with the present prosperity of the neighboring Island of Cuba. And what gives the greater effect to this delusion is, that the instruments for spreading it are frequently men of honest intentions, and, on the generality of subjects, very well informed, but whose total ignorance of the history of Jamaica makes them easy dupes, and who, indeed, are very often blindly led into the ditch by guides in the form of respectable residents of the island, hardly less ignorant than themselves; for it is not among the residents of Jamaica that any thing beyond very superficial ideas of the history of the island is generally to be found.

As the bearing of this matter on grave domestic questions gives to it a high degree of interest, we propose to explain the true state of facts with respect to Jamaica, past as well as present, in order to put our readers in the position to draw legitimate conclusions, and to avoid being deluded by falsehoods, which, though reported by almost every mail from the West Indies, whatever currency and general acceptance they may gain by that repetition, are not rendered thereby any the less groundless and delusive.

The Island of Jamaica has an extent of a little less than six thousand square miles. It is thus about the size of the States of Connecticut and Rhode Island together. Like all the West India Islands, it consists of a central group of mountains, with fertile plains, of no great width, extending from their foot to the coast. Being placed directly south of the east end of Cuba, and thus cut off from the northern breezes, which reach it much in the state of a sponge already once squeezed, it suffers much more from drought than either Cuba, Hayti, or Porto Rico; many of its fertile plains, too distant from the mountains, and unfreshed by summer showers, are, from that cause, rendered worthless; while the rugged character of much of the interior, with the climate and difficulties of transportation,

wholly unfit for the production of sugar and coffee. In natural fertility of soil, it is, or rather was, — for of virgin soil fit for cultivation none is left, — decidedly inferior to the other three islands, and more exposed, also, to storms and hurricanes, by which, occasionally, it suffers very severely.

Columbus discovered Jamaica on his second voyage, in May, 1494. In his fourth voyage, in 1503, he ran his leaky vessel on shore on the coast of the island, and remained there for fifteen months. In 1507, Don Diego, Columbus's viceroy, sent a colony to occupy it. The natives, as in the case of all the West India Islands settled by the Spaniards, were speedily worn out by unaccustomed labor. Negroes were introduced to supply their places; but the demand for colonial produce was then very slight; and when Jamaica surrendered to Admiral Penn (the father of our William Penn) in 1655, with whom was our Winslow, one of the founders of Plymouth colony, and who, being then in England as agent for Massachusetts, was sent out in the fleet by Cromwell, as one of the commissioners for superintending such conquests as might be made, it contained only a thousand or two of Spanish creoles, and a less number of negroes. The Spaniards submitted to the invaders; most of the negroes fled to the interior mountains, where they became the progenitors of the maroons, recruited from time to time by additional runaways, from whose depredations Jamaica afterwards suffered so much, and of whom she finally got rid, so late as 1796, only by the disgraceful breach of a capitulation into which they had been induced to enter. These maroons, transported by that breach of faith to Nova Scotia, became, along with some of the refugee slaves from Virginia and Maryland, whom the British at the close of the revolutionary war had refused to give up, the first settlers of the colony of Sierra Leone, and some of their descendants are at this day thriving merchants, and among the leading inhabitants of that Anglo-African settlement.

Cromwell, who had expected to get St. Domingo, from which his fleet was repulsed, was anxious to make all he could out of Jamaica. He tried to persuade the settlers at New Haven, who had not prospered altogether according to their expectations, to remove thither in a body, and in a sermonizing letter endeavored to convince them that they had a call from God to that work. They declined this pressing invitation; but among the adventurers who did go to Jamaica was Samuel Vassall, who had been one of the first settlers of Massachusetts, but whom the intolerant spirit prevailing there had induced to leave, and whose large landed estates acquired in Jamaica passed finally, together with his name, into the family of the Foxes, the head of which now bears the aristocratic title of Lord Holland.

Winslow, who died shortly after landing, was succeeded by Sedgwick, another New England man, who had served in the parliamentary army, and whose posterity are very honorably distinguished among us. But this new

commissioner, on arriving in Jamaica, did not find things in a very promising condition. The soldiers left there had been principally drawn from the Island of Barbadoes, which had then a much larger white population than at present — being, in fact, at that time (just two hundred years ago) the most populous and wealthy of the English colonies in America. But these troops by no means came up to the standard of our good Puritan, parliamentary soldier, who was afterwards major general of Massachusetts; and in his official letters he described them very much as our letter writers of to-day describe the Jamaica negroes, "so lazy and idle as it cannot enter into the heart of any Englishman that such blood should run in the veins of any born in England." To recruit this rather unpromising population, Cromwell ordered a thousand girls and young men to be enlisted in Ireland, and he directed the administrators of the Scottish government to apprehend all "known idle, masterless robbers and vagabonds" for transportation thither. A certain number of prisoners of war were also disposed of in the same manner.

The best thing that offered to these first English settlers in Jamaica was privateering against the Spaniards; and even after the establishment of amicable relations between Spain and England, they still kept it up. So far did Sir Thomas Modyford, who was governor in 1668, carry his notions of colonial rights, — a man after the heart of our nullifiers, whom he anticipated by almost two centuries, — that he declared war on behalf of the island against Spain, merely for the sake of being able to give commissions to the cruisers; for it is to be observed that the buccaneers of those times, like the kidnappers of ours, always preferred, when it was possible, to act under a commission. The prosperity of Jamaica, like that of the neighboring colony of French St. Domingo, (the present empire of Hayti,) thus took its start from buccaneering. Such was the source of the wealth, luxury, and profligacy, no doubt exaggerated by tradition, of Port Royal, now become an English town. But Sir Thomas Modyford was not, by any means, a man of one idea. Besides granting commissions to the buccaneers, it was he too who introduced the cultivation of sugar; and when buccaneering began to grow less profitable, and more dangerous, — though till the last moment Port Royal afforded them a market for their prizes and entertainment for their money, — the richer and more stable-minded of the old buccaneers began to import and buy negroes, and to turn their attention to sugar planting — the introduction into Europe of the use of tea and coffee having opened an enlarged market, and created a new demand for that article. From buccaneering to sugar planting — such was the second step in the career of population and prosperity alike in Jamaica and in French St. Domingo.

Jamaica, however, still retained its interest in navigation; and from

fighting and plundering the Spaniards began now to trade with them. This trade, in fact, had in it something of the excitement, the risks, and the profits, too, of buccaneering; for the Spanish colonial system allowed no commerce with strangers, and the traffic actually carried on had either to be forced, in spite of the Spanish *guarda costas*, or insinuated by vessels that anchored off the coast under pretence of leaks, injury by storms, or lack of supplies, the eyes of the Spanish officers being closed with gold; or else worked through under cover of the *assiento* treaty, by which Spain had ceded first to France, and afterwards to England, the privilege of introducing, annually, a certain number of negro slaves into her colonies, with whom the vessels admitted for that purpose contrived also to smuggle in a great many other kinds of goods.

Port Royal was ruined by an earthquake in 1722, but Kingston succeeded it, and grew to be the largest town in the West Indies—not at all as a mere port for shipping sugar and landing plantation supplies, but as the entrepot of the entire British trade with Spanish America. And this entrepot it remained till the revolt of the Spanish colonies, first against the Bonaparte family and afterwards against the restored Bourbons, by opening the Spanish American ports to legitimate commerce, made any such smuggling entrepot unnecessary. Kingston, also, while the slave trade lasted, was the grand British entrepot for that traffic; and Bryan Edwards calculates that, besides the import for domestic supply, Kingston had, during the eighteenth century, the profits on half a million of negroes furnished to other colonies, foreign and British.

The city of Kingston was thus built up by smuggling and slave trading. Both these occupations are now gone, and no other has yet been created to supply their places. This simple statement of historical facts will serve to explain the decay, dilapidation, and houses to let, observed by correspondents at Kingston, the general stopping-place of travellers, and the source whence come so many Jeremiads about ruin, decay, and insolent free niggers that won't work. The very same result from similar causes might have been seen twenty years ago in many dilapidated New England seaport towns, such as Newport, Salem, and Newburyport, into which manufacturing industry has again introduced bustle and prosperity. Jamaica, however, so far from having any protective policy to aid her in contending against the revolutions of commerce, after having been for years the spoilt child of Protection, having been as a slave colony always sustained by the close monopoly (in common with the other British sugar islands) of the British sugar market, and by occasional large parliamentary grants of money direct, has been exposed as a free colony, with its lands exhausted, its credit greatly diminished, and its supply of labor curtailed, to a thorough-going free-trade competition, not only with the virgin soil, resident proprie-

tors, and large slave importations of Cuba, but with British capital and skill also newly employed to aid in bringing these advantages into most effectual play.

CHAPTER II.—*Sugar growing in Jamaica.*

THE original sugar planters of Jamaica — and the same was the case in all the other British islands in the West Indies — were residents in the colony, who settled there with the intention to live and to die there, and whose operations were principally carried on by means of their own capital. Such still continues to be the state of things in the Spanish islands, and, to a certain extent, also, in the French islands; but in all the English islands, in the course of the eighteenth century, a very different system was introduced. The sugars, after they were made, had to be sent to London or Bristol for sale; and the merchant employed to sell them was also employed to buy and send out the plantation supplies. Sometimes a drought, or hurricane, a negro revolt, or a maroon inroad, prevented any crop, or destroyed it. But the supplies must still be had. They were furnished on credit. A debt was contracted, which, frequently growing larger and larger, was finally secured by mortgage, with the condition to ship all the sugars in the merchant's vessels, and consigned to his house. The debt growing larger and larger, finally the mortgage was foreclosed; and thus in many cases formally, in almost all the rest substantially, sooner or later most of the old estates passed into the hands of the few great English mercantile houses, known as the West India interest. The same process, precisely, was rapidly going on with our Virginia tobacco planters till the revolution put a stop to British credits; leaving unpaid, however, that great mass of British debts of which the Virginians struggled so hard to escape the payment; which had so injurious an influence on our domestic policy, having nearly plunged us into a premature new war with England, and the payment of which the Federal Government was finally obliged to assume.

Towards the middle of the last century, the market for sugars rapidly increasing, and coffee also having been introduced into the West Indies as a new staple, a great many new plantations were established by means of funds mainly advanced by these same West India houses, and, of course, secured by mortgage. But although the establishment of new plantations thus went on in Jamaica, as long as there was any new land fit for the purpose, we are not to suppose, with so many of our Jamaica letter writers, that a slave sugar plantation was a high road to opulence perfectly certain and sure. Bryan Edwards, the historian of the West Indies, himself an experienced planter, who had seen the elephant, informs us that while thirty thousand pounds sterling was the very smallest sum that would suf-

fice to establish a paying plantation, the profits to be expected on this outlay — assuming a fair product and average prices — would not exceed seven per cent.; and this without charging a shilling for making good the decrease of the negroes, — a very heavy item, — or for the wear and tear of the buildings, or making any allowance for dead capital, or for the tax of six per cent. of the gross value levied on the crops of absentees. “With these and other drawbacks, to say nothing of the devastations, which are sometimes occasioned by fires and hurricanes, destroying in a few hours the labor of years, it is not wonderful,” he adds, “that the profits should sometimes dwindle to nothing, or, rather, *that a sugar estate, with all its boasted advantages, should sometimes prove a millstone about the neck of its unfortunate proprietor, which is dragging him to destruction!*” True Jamaica rhetoric that! A Jeremiad, too, uttered before emancipation was even so much as thought of; and yet, who wouldn’t suppose that it was copied word for word from some letter from some travelling correspondent come to hand by the very last mail from Kingston?

Anticipating that this plain and disenchanting statement might somewhat surprise some of the verdant, Edwards proceeds, on behalf of the said verdant, to put to himself this question: “Seeing that a capital is wanted which few men can command, and considering, withal, that the returns are in general but small, and at best uncertain, how has it happened that the sugar islands have been rapidly settled, and many a great estate purchased in the mother country from the profits which have accrued from their cultivation?”

“It were to be wished,” he says in reply, “that those who make such inquiries would inquire, on the other hand, how many unhappy persons have been totally and irretrievably ruined by adventuring in the cultivation of those islands without possessing any adequate means to support them in such great undertakings. On the failure of some of these unfortunate men, vast estates have indeed been raised by persons who have had money at command. Money is advanced and encouragement given to a certain point, but a skilful practitioner well knows where to stop; he is aware what very large sums must be expended before any return can be made. One third of the money thus expended he has, perhaps, furnished; but the time soon comes when a further advance is requisite. Now, then, is the moment for oppression. If the lands promise great returns, the sagacious creditor, instead of giving further aid, or leaving his too confident debtor to make the best of his way by his own exertions, pleads a sudden and unexpected emergency, and insists on immediate payment of the sum already lent. The law, on this occasion, is far from being chargeable with delay, and avarice is inexorable. A sale is hurried on, and no bidders appear but the creditor himself. Ready money is required in payment, and every one sees that a further sum will be wanting to make the estate productive. Few, therefore, have the means who have even the wish efficaciously to assist the devoted victim. Thus the creditor gets the estate at his own price, commonly for his first advance, and the miserable debtor has reason to thank his stars, if, consoling himself with only the loss of his own original capital, and his labor for a series of years, he escapes a prison for life.

“At the same time it cannot justly be denied that there are creditors who, having advanced their money to resident planters, not in the view of deriving

undue advantages, but solely on the fair and honorable ground of reciprocal benefit, have been compelled, much against their inclination, to become planters themselves — being obliged to receive *unprofitable* West India estates in payment, or lose their money altogether. I have known plantations transferred in this manner *which are a burden instead of a benefit*, and which are kept up solely in the hope that favorable crops and an advance in prices may, some time or other, invite purchasers.

"Thus oppression in one class of creditors, and gross injustice towards another, contribute equally to keep up cultivation in a country where, if the risks and losses are great, the gains are sometimes commensurate; for sugar estates there are, undoubtedly, from which, instead of the returns that I have estimated, double that profit has been obtained. It is indeed true that such instances are extremely rare; but, perhaps, to that very circumstance — which to a philosopher, speculating in his closet, would seem sufficient to deter a wise man from adventuring in this line of cultivation — it is chiefly owing that so much money has been expended in it. I mean the fluctuating nature of its returns. The quality of sugar varies occasionally so much as to create a difference in its value of ten shillings the hundred, which, for the superior quality, is pure gain. Much, undoubtedly, depends on skill in the manufacture; and, the process being apparently simple, the beholder feels almost an irresistible propensity to engage in it. Though, perhaps, not more than one man in fifty comes away fortunate, every sanguine adventurer takes it for granted that he shall be that one. *Thus his system of life becomes a course of experiments, and if ruin should be the consequence of his rashness, he imputes his misfortunes to any cause rather than to his own want, and capacity, and foresight.*"

These extracts from Edwards afford an insight into the rationale of slave cultivation according to the system which ultimately prevailed throughout the British West Indies, and to a very considerable extent also in the French and Dutch colonies. The motive power of the system, the real owners not only of the plantations and of the slaves, but of the nominal proprietors also, were a few great mercantile houses in Europe, with whom it was a leading object to secure the transportation of the sugars and of the plantation supplies in their vessels, with the commissions on their sale and purchase. It was these profits, and these alone, that sufficed to cover the numerous risks of sugar planting, and to justify the large advances which the business required.

Though often compelled to carry on the estates in their own names and at their own sole risk, these European merchants greatly preferred to stand in the relation of mortgagees — thus leaving all the risks to be borne, so long as they could stand under them, by nominal proprietors. These nominal proprietors were chiefly drawn from the mercantile class, or from the class of overseers, doctors, lawyers, master mechanics, and others, who, going out to the colonies to seek their fortunes, had gradually, as *attachés* to the plantations, accumulated a few thousand pounds — often, it was said, in the case of the overseers, by cheating their absent employers. Whatever resident in the colonies, by whatever means, succeeded in getting together a considerable sum of money, was drawn on, by a fascination like that of the gaming table, to invest it in a sugar plantation, which remained mortgaged for the balance to the European consignees of the produce. The certain

ruin that in nineteen cases out of twenty attended this procedure was proverbial in the West Indies; yet few indeed who had the means, had the strength of mind to resist the temptation to become (nominal) proprietors — that being the height of West Indian glory and dignity; while a few fortunes acquired here and there by extraordinary crops or series of crops, or by a sudden rise in the sugar market, occasioned by war or other accident, served still to bait the trap.

It was thus that the European sugar houses absorbed every thing — not only the labor of the black slaves, but all the earnings and savings of their white *employés* also — drawn at last into a plantation investment — the nominal proprietors being scarcely less bond slaves than the very negroes themselves. To these few houses, and to these alone, was sugar planting, under the slave system, a profitable venture. To every body else employed in it, black or white, it was incessant, exhausting, and unrequited toil, except that the black people had a very scanty and insufficient supply of food and clothing, — the latter generally a rag about their loins, — and the white people a pretty good supply of these, with plenty of wine, brandy, ale, rum, and black mistresses, horses to ride, and negroes to domineer over. And this, under the most prosperous times of the slave system, constituted the entire sum and substance of Jamaica prosperity! But even this kind of prosperity, such as it was, carried with it the seeds of its own decay. Two things were absolutely essential to its continuance — an unlimited supply of new land, and an unlimited supply of new slaves to take the places of those annually used up on the plantations.

The era of the highest planter prosperity of Jamaica corresponds exactly with the era of the highest planter prosperity of Virginia — that is to say, the twenty years preceding the breaking out of our revolutionary war. During this period the market for colonial produce enlarged steadily. Jamaica and Virginia, from the establishments already made in them, had the decided advantage over newer and yet infant settlements. There was still a sufficiency of virgin land; slaves were imported in greater numbers than ever before, and the establishment of new plantations went on in an accelerated ratio. But soon the same inevitable drawback laid its claw upon both Jamaica and Virginia. The lands in both, suitable for plantations, began to be exhausted, and settlers and speculators began to seek out fresh lands elsewhere. The first great rival of Jamaica in this respect (what Cuba is to her now) was French St. Domingo. The cultivation of that colony in the latter half of the last century advanced with very rapid strides, and her exports from the period of the American war — from which Jamaica suffered greatly, in the starvation of her slaves and the loss of her accustomed supplies of lumber — began to rival and presently to exceed those of the English colony. The French revolution and its result, the self-

emancipation of the slaves of St. Domingo, delivered Jamaica from that powerful and hated rival. But about the same time with this deliverance, a change was made in the policy of Spain respecting Porto Rico and Cuba, and these islands, hitherto without trade, and with a very limited population, presented themselves as new competitors in the business of sugar growing. Presently, too, by the abolition of the slave trade, Jamaica lost her annual supply of laborers, who thenceforward, down even to the present moment, have annually diminished. For though the total population of Jamaica has increased since emancipation, that increase consists of children not yet of an age for labor; while not only has the adult able-bodied population gone on still diminishing year by year, but the women, formerly employed equally with the men in the field and the sugar mill, from the necessity of taking care of their infant children and overseeing, not slave huts, but free households, have necessarily been withdrawn from plantation labor.

With her lands year after year more and more exhausted, her supply of labor diminishing, the protective sugar duties repealed, old and worn-out Jamaica is exposed to competition with new and fertile Cuba. Compare Virginia and Missouri, and their present rate of growth, and understand, O ye travellers and letter writers! why it is that the sugar growing interest declines in Jamaica and flourishes in Cuba; why it is that, in this particular line of sugar growing, the old emancipated colonies cannot compete with the new slave ones.

CHAPTER III. — *The "Ruin" of Jamaica an old Story.*

IN reference to the alleged former prosperity and pretended present "ruin" of Jamaica, we have seen in what that prosperity consisted; and that, by the operation of causes entirely independent of the nature of the labor employed, that prosperity, such as it was, had already reached its period, and had commenced a gradual decline years before the abolition of slavery, or even of the slave trade.

That prosperity, to restate the matter in a few words, consisted in the diligent and laborious cultivation of a certain number of sugar and coffee plantations, by upward of three hundred thousand negroes, in the lowest state of degradation, misery, ignorance, and barbarism, uninstructed, religiously or otherwise, naked, or nearly so, supported on a scanty allowance of the coarsest food, (and a large part of that imported,) forced to labor some sixteen hours a day, and annually diminishing at the rate of nearly three per cent., — the number being kept good only by fresh importations from Africa, — while all the profits of this forced and cruel toil went into the coffers of a few great British commercial houses, except what stuck by the way, and

was employed in the maintenance of about twenty-five thousand white residents of the island, who alone were taken into account when the people and the prosperity of Jamaica were spoken of.

These white persons had a political representation in the colonial legislature, and except as to matters of trade, with which alone the home government interfered, they were lords and masters of the island, (always saving the supreme authority of the non-resident proprietors and mortgagees, who controlled at pleasure the legislation of the Assembly.) These white residents consisted in, perhaps, about equal numbers of creoles, or persons born on the island, and of accessions from abroad. Of these creoles the larger part were the descendants of the early British settlers, once numerous, but gradually wasting away, without slaves, poor and lazy, but to whom manual agricultural labor would have been a disgrace; living, as they could, by odd jobs, and occupying a position somewhat like that of the poorest and meanest white population in our southern towns and villages. The rest of the creoles were the children of more recent settlers, of whom a certain proportion had been sent "home" — that is, to Great Britain — for education, but who were no more able than the other class of creoles, already described, to perpetuate their race; and who, in the competition of business, were entirely outdone by the immigrant class, in whom, conjointly with the sugar houses at home, resided the motive power that kept the system in operation. The most successful of this immigrant class were generally Scotchmen, — hard, sharp, driving, and close-fisted, — who got what they could, and saved what they got; and who found it not difficult to conquer in Jamaica all the little "prejudices" and scruples which they had brought with them from Scotland.

A few of these whites found employment as lawyers and physicians; for the island was very unhealthy for white people living as the whites of Jamaica did, and the white inhabitants were very litigious, to say nothing of numerous debts to be collected. Here and there a jolly parson might be met with; for Jamaica had a few old livings. A somewhat larger number came out as clerks in mercantile establishments, and as millwrights, carpenters, masons, or smiths — employments of which they soon learned to shift all the manual labor upon negro slaves trained up to the business. But the chief occupation was the management and superintendence of the plantations, each of which had a chief overseer, with several inferior overseers, or bookkeepers, as they were called, and, in the case of absentee proprietors, an attorney to represent the proprietor.

The family circle was quite a rarity in slaveholding Jamaica. Marriage was the exception, not the rule. The male white population far exceeded the females in number, of whom, however, the greater portion was left to wither in single blessedness. Of the immigrant population very few were

women ; and such wives as were occasionally brought out from Great Britain pretty generally soon wished themselves at home again. The white men supplied themselves with mistresses and housekeepers, either from among the slaves or the free people of color, who formed, during the so-much-regretted era of Jamaica prosperity, a third and equally distinct class of the population. These free people of color, with whom were reckoned also a few manumitted negroes, amounted to about ten thousand in number, being the offspring of the connections above mentioned. In a few rare cases these colored children were educated and provided for in a fatherly manner. If the mother were a slave, it was considered in Jamaica — our democratic slaveholders think differently — only an act of common decency to secure the freedom of the child ; but here, in general, the care of the father stopped. With few exceptions, the males, unprovided with any means of gaining for themselves a creditable livelihood, keenly sensitive to the honor on the one side of their white parentage, and to the disgrace of their African blood on the other, were left speedily to terminate, or miserably to protract, a wretched existence as they might. They were subjected to much the same legal disabilities and indignities as are the colored people of our Southern States, not being allowed to testify against a white man, to vote, or to hold any office ; and the legislature of Jamaica had also provided — a thing not yet found necessary in any of our Southern States — that no testamentary devise from a white person to a negro or mulatto should be valid if it exceeded the amount of seven thousand dollars. The females had, as their only resource, the concubinage above described — a degraded position, in which, however, they often fulfilled, with the utmost scrupulousness and self-devotion, all the duties, without enjoying one of the rights, of a wife, and which, as it secured to them and their colored relations a white champion and protector, was regarded as the greatest piece of good fortune, and the most respectable position to which they could possibly attain.

Such was the prosperity over the decay of which so many regrets are uttered — the enjoyments, if they are to be called such, secured by it to the limited white population, and to them only, being of the grossest character. From living constantly among negroes, mostly imported from Africa, over whom they exercised despotic authority, the white immigrants, the greater part of them not over refined to begin with, degenerated into gross barbarians. Their only relaxations were drunken frolics, naked negro girls being employed to wait at table ; while it was an ordinary piece of Jamaica hospitality to furnish, not only a bed to the guest, but a woman to share it. Such were the pleasures of the whites of Jamaica. Their business consisted in watching and driving up the negroes, and in gradually accumulating the means to flit for a moment as nominal proprietor of a plantation, which proprietorship, in nineteen cases out of twenty, speedily transferred these hard-earned gains into the coffers of some London sugar house.

Nor was even this wretched system sustained, except by a strict monopoly of the British sugar market, secured to the British West India planters — a monopoly which, in the latter quarter of the last century, was so severely felt by the British consumers, considering the prices at which they might have purchased the rival sugars of French St. Domingo, as to raise a great clamor in England against the whole system of West India cultivation as a ruinous and losing concern, accompanied by a scheme for drawing the supply of sugar from the East Indies — a scheme which only received its quietus when the revolt of the slaves in French St. Domingo had freed the British colonies from that invidious contrast. On the other hand, the legislature of Jamaica complained with no less emphasis of the wretched condition to which the island was reduced. They stated, in a formal report, that, in consequence of the interruption of their usual supplies, resulting from the quarrel between Great Britain and her northern continental colonies, (now the United States,) fifteen thousand negroes had perished, between the end of 1780 and the beginning of 1787, “of famine, or of diseases contracted by scanty and unwholesome diet.” Another report, dated November 22, 1792, represents that, in the course of twenty years preceding, one hundred and seventy-seven estates were sold for the payment of debts, fifty-five were *thrown up*, — so long ago had that *abandonment* of estates commenced, of which we nowadays hear so much, as though it were a new thing growing out of emancipation, — and ninety-two were then in the hands of creditors, while, during the same period, eighty thousand and twenty-one executions, amounting to above twenty-two million five hundred thousand pounds sterling, had been lodged in the provost marshal's office.

Such was the prosperity of Jamaica in 1792; and accounts still more lamentable are given in another report of November 23, 1804, and in reports of the British House of Commons, of July 24, 1807, of April 13, 1808 — report No. 279, 1812, and No. 381, 1832; from all which it appears that Jamaica ruin is an ancient and chronic complaint — as painful, no doubt, but apparently not much more dangerous than the gout, which, as the patient has survived it for seventy years or more, is not likely, perhaps, to result in immediate dissolution; especially as the inhabitants of the island, in spite of this protracted and reiterated ruin of the sugar planters, are vastly better off in every respect — socially, politically, intellectually, religiously, physically, and morally — than at any former period.

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